THE OB

How I became a kill

Exclusive interview Teenage murderer Jamie Pet
explains why he and his best friend stabbed a ma

In the award winning Life magazine

ESTABLISHED 1791

SUNDAY

Labour's olive branch to private schools

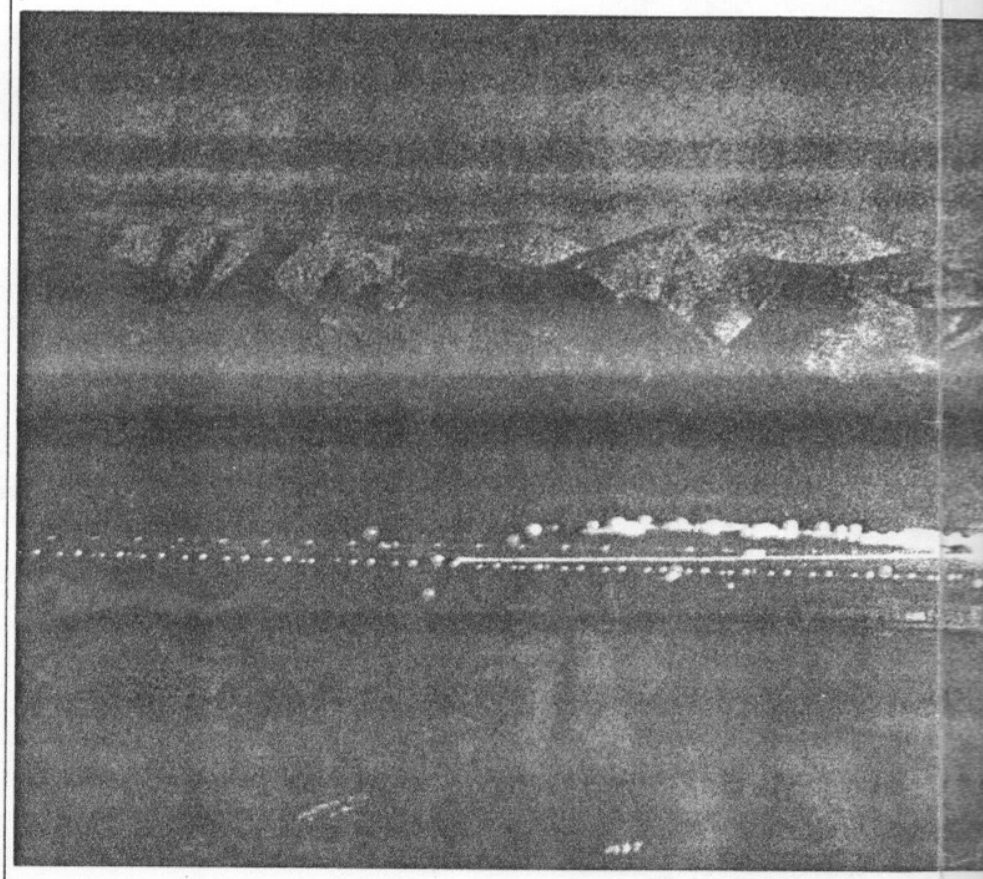
Barry Hugill
Education Correspondent

LABOUR is planning to woo hundreds of private schools back into the state system. In a reversal of its long-standing hostility to fee-paying schools, it hopes to convince them only Labour can guarantee their long-term survival.

This olive branch will fuel the furious row engulfing Labour following Tony Blair's decision to send his son, Euan, to a grant-maintained school. Writing in today's *Observer*, Roy Hattersley, the former deputy leader, says extending choice is 'about the wish to reintroduce selective education in an even more devisive form than the old 11-plus . . . it will condemn millions of working-class children to an education which is generally regarded as inferior'.

Last night David Blunkett, the party's education spokesman, confirmed that talks had been held with headteachers of both grant-maintained and private schools: 'We are keen to explore the possibility of bringing back in some of the independent schools. I favour diversity and think there is potentially a place in the state system for them.'

Revealed: Dreamland, the air base t



Close encounters: Mysterious lights shine through the Nevada desert night at a top-se

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BSERVER

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e Petrolini
a man to death

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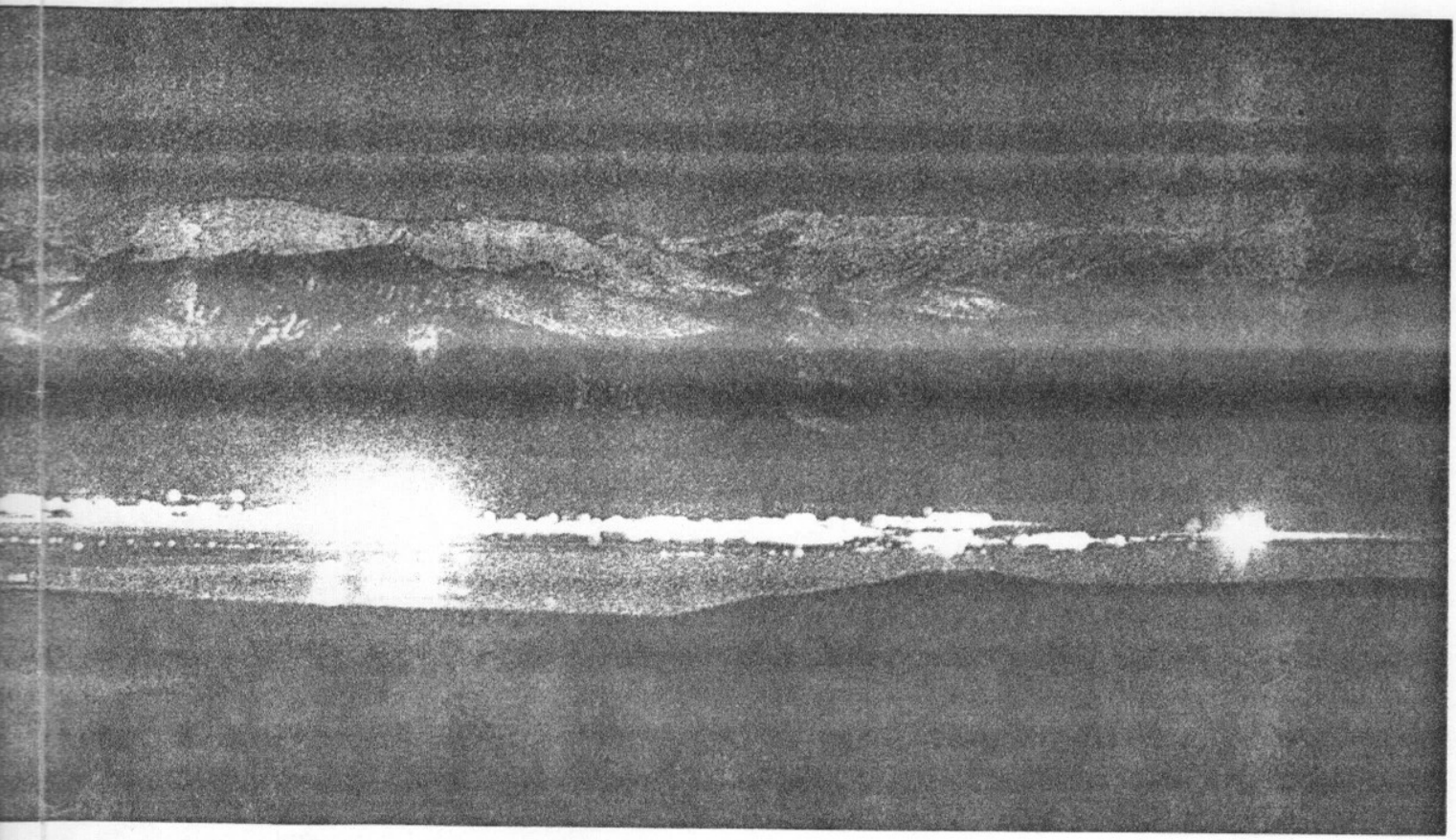
UNDAY 4 DECEMBER 1994

No. 10599 **90p**

se that officially does not exist but where people are dying



a top-secret base where toxic paint used on the Stealth fighter is said to have claimed lives. Story, page 15./Photograph by John Carnett.

r you lose the dole

cret base, taken from a satellite in 1988. Insert: Robert Frost, who died mysteriously.

answer them. Turley found self sitting alone opposite a n of 10 government lawyers, se opening move was to as- the National Security Privi-, that civil courts were unable to deal with the case. But the judge (an Air Force veteran) awarded Turley the first round, conceding on 10 November that the privilege applied to evidence, not to judicial terrain. With the discovery process under way, and the stakes raised, Turley — presuming the government would expect a long 'wish-list' — filed instead only a single question: What is the name of this facility?

down upon Dreamland this week, but soon even this may be impossible.

The Air Force has staked a sudden claim to 4,500 square miles of carefully designated land which would remove all viewpoints of the base from public access, possibly within one month. If the USAF wins, Dreamland will finally disappear from view.

'It's like something out of a bad 1950s movie,' said Turley. 'The Soviets had pictures of it, kids in Nevada play with toys of planes that fly from it, and I've got clients who are dying from it . . . but it doesn't exist.'

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(HOW'S THAT FOR A SUNDAY SERVICE?)

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INNER LONDON Irving Street, WC2 OUTER LONDON REGIONAL Cheltenham, Inverness, Bridge Street

been the keeper of America's darkest military secrets, the 'Black Programmes' that never feature on budget lists. The prototype for the U2 spy-plane was built here; then the 'Blackbird' that flew at 2,190mph; then the jet-black Stealth fighter that defies belief as well as radar. And now the base is cradle to a next generation of hyper-sonic airplanes, christened 'Aurora', which — at 5,000mph — will be the fastest mechanical creatures ever built by man.

Dreamland's human secrets are now at the centre of one of the most remarkable cases in recent American legal history. Tomorrow, a young lawyer, Jonathan Turley, will file a 'Motion to Compel' the US government to name whatever lies beside Groom Lake, thereby admitting to its existence and bringing it within the jurisdiction of the law.

Professor Turley is mounting the first legal challenge against the 'Black Programmes', claiming that workers at Dreamland are suffering terrible, sometimes lethal diseases — their skin covered with sores, peeling and cracking — as noxious clouds bulge and swirl across the terrain.

Helen Frost, the widow of one man who died of what tests show to be high levels of toxic chemicals — together with five workers and former workers at the base — is suing the US Defence Secretary, William Perry, President Clinton's National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, and the Air Force Secretary, Sheila Widnall, for breach of federal laws on toxic waste disposal.

to 4,500 square miles of carefully designated land which would remove all public viewpoints of the base

American West, vastly dark with lambent stellar constellations stretching back to infinity. But out here on the edges of Dreamland, the firmament is alive with the creations of man.

Switch off the car engine and lights, and behind the night there moves the roar of jet engines. A red light darts into view, and then another, the pair dancing around each another, the twisting and jinking of a practice dogfight.

The exercise over, runway lights flare up for a few moments behind the mountains, then the empty land falls silent again.

The only hamlet in this wilderness is Rachel, formerly a tungsten mining town, and now no more than a scrappy collection of about 50 mobile homes. Its residents were among the so-called 'Downwinders' caught in the clouds of the early nuclear bomb tests of the Forties. And the legacy is a strange local folklore.

The only place to stay at Rachel is a trailer called the 'A'le'Inn', a play on the word alien. The sign reads: 'UFOs and crews always welcome.'

Area 51 first entered the world of American scientific mythology when Bob Lazar, a former colleague of the A-bomb wizard Ed- to work for 10 years as a journeyman and foreman, during the development of the Stealth fighter, until his death in 1989.

'He couldn't tell anyone where he worked, or what he was working with,' said Mrs Frost, still living on the outskirts of Vegas. 'The phone at work was tapped.'

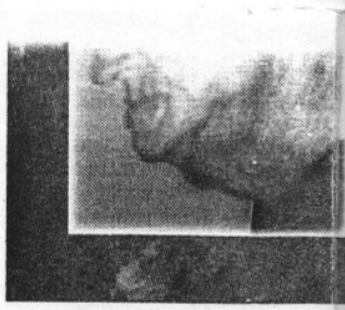
Frost fell ill. 'He came home from work saying, "My eyes are on fire, my face is on fire", and splashed himself with cold water,' Mrs Frost recalled last week.

He lost weight rapidly, developed rashes and weeping sores, his stomach swelled, his face peeled, his skin began to crack and bleed. He was cold even in the sweltering desert summer. It was then that he finally died — by which time he was almost blind.

Tissues sent for analysis to an Agent Orange expert, Dr Peter Kahn at Rutgers University, New Jersey, and later to a laboratory in Sweden, showed high levels of hazardous chemicals.

Mrs Frost knew one sick man at Area 51 who had committed suicide, and others who were hospitalised by their illnesses. 'As with my husband,' she said, 'they can't talk to the doctor about their work, because it doesn't exist, and it was made clear that if they did, they'd go to jail.'

Mrs Frost joined five employees and former employees to work with Professor Turley's Environmental Crimes Project in Washington, and to sue the highest military authorities in the US. The five remain anonymous, for fear, says the writ, of 'extra-judicial harassment and even physical harm.' The affadavits reveal a cocktail of toxic chemicals — dioxins, methyl-ethyl-ketone, trichlorethylene and dibenzofurans — were being burned, causing explosions and releasing clouds of hazardous gas. Repeated requests for protective clothing and respirators were denied.



Soviet view: A picture of the

The workers were 'unable to seek redress for injuries or to prevent injuries to other workers . . . [because] the disclosure of any activities within Groom Lake base . . . might be viewed as actionable violation subject to severe criminal or civil penalty.'

Meanwhile, the submission claims, the process was a flagrant breach of the laws governing disposal of toxic waste, and of reporting and site inventory regulations.

'The central issue in this case,' reads the submission, 'is the invocation of national security to shield government misconduct, even potential crimes, from public disclosure or judicial review.'

The government's first response was either to deny the allegations or to say that there was insufficient detail on the chemicals involved for the defendants

DATELINE

Sleaze and slogans mark the road to Shangri-La

Sikkim

Richard Brooks

SIKKIM, the tiny north-east Indian state which was ruled by a succession of kings over the centuries until it was annexed by New Delhi in 1975, has the most extraordinary road signs in the world.

On the hilltop drive into the capital Gangtok, which nestles between the Himalayas and Tibet, one is assailed by road signs in English (Sikkim's second language after Nepali) inspired by the Indian poet Tagore and Shakespeare, or offering advice about the hazards of driving along the precipitous roads. 'On a curve, keep your nerve,' says one. 'Driving faster can cause disaster,' warns another. 'Speed has five letters like death,' advises a third. But my favourite was the ghoulish: 'If you want to give blood, don't give it on the road.' There is probably some office in the Indian central bureaucracy

mountains. In 1975 Sikkim's 200,000 people voted to become India's 22nd state. Despite recent attempts to attract tourists to Sikkim, visas are limited. Do not think you can venture the 20 miles from Gangtok to the Chinese Tibetan border.

Sikkim has good reasons for being paranoid about security. For years China has laid claim to it and, despite better relations, Peking has still not recognised Sikkim as an Indian state. As recently as October an Indian government report said of Sikkim that 'it will not be in the interest of our security if foreigners are allowed access and thereby secure information about the deployment of our military personnel'.

In fact, it is easy to see how they are deployed as they are everywhere. They even patrol the roof of my hotel in Gangtok, the Tashi Delek, which defies the Trades Description Act by calling itself 'the luxury of heights' despite haphazard water and electricity supply and no heating, which necessitated my first hot water bottle since childhood

up the populace was not so much the first elections for five years, but the fact that the state had been declared alcohol-free for the occasion. To the many serious drinkers of Sikkim (millet beer is the main brew), this was devastating.

In case anybody did have difficulty working out who they should vote for, the parties had helpfully decided on different symbols, which they painted on every wall. A hand for Congress; an umbrella for the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF); an elephant for the Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP); and a light bulb for the Independents. Then there were clocks, fishes, watches and ladders for some of the eight other parties fighting for the 32 seats in the Assembly.

The election issues are universal. Taxes, the economy (rice and spices mainly), health and schools. So how does the electorate decide? Frankly, it depends on which party can bribe most voters. The bribes vary from 50 rupees (£1) to 1,000. But there is a new twist for this election. 'In

Worldwatch

Kurd paper hit by bomb blasts

Bomb blasts destroyed the main Istanbul and Ankara offices of *Ozger Ulke* (Free Country), Turkey's leading pro-Kurdish daily, in apparently co-ordinated attacks. At least one man was killed and 22 were wounded.

Russians freed

Authorities in the breakaway republic of Chechnya released two wounded Russian servicemen captured in an abortive opposition attempt to topple the regime. In the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, Georgy Chanturia, head of the opposition National Democratic Party, was killed in a machine-gun attack on his car.

Four die in club

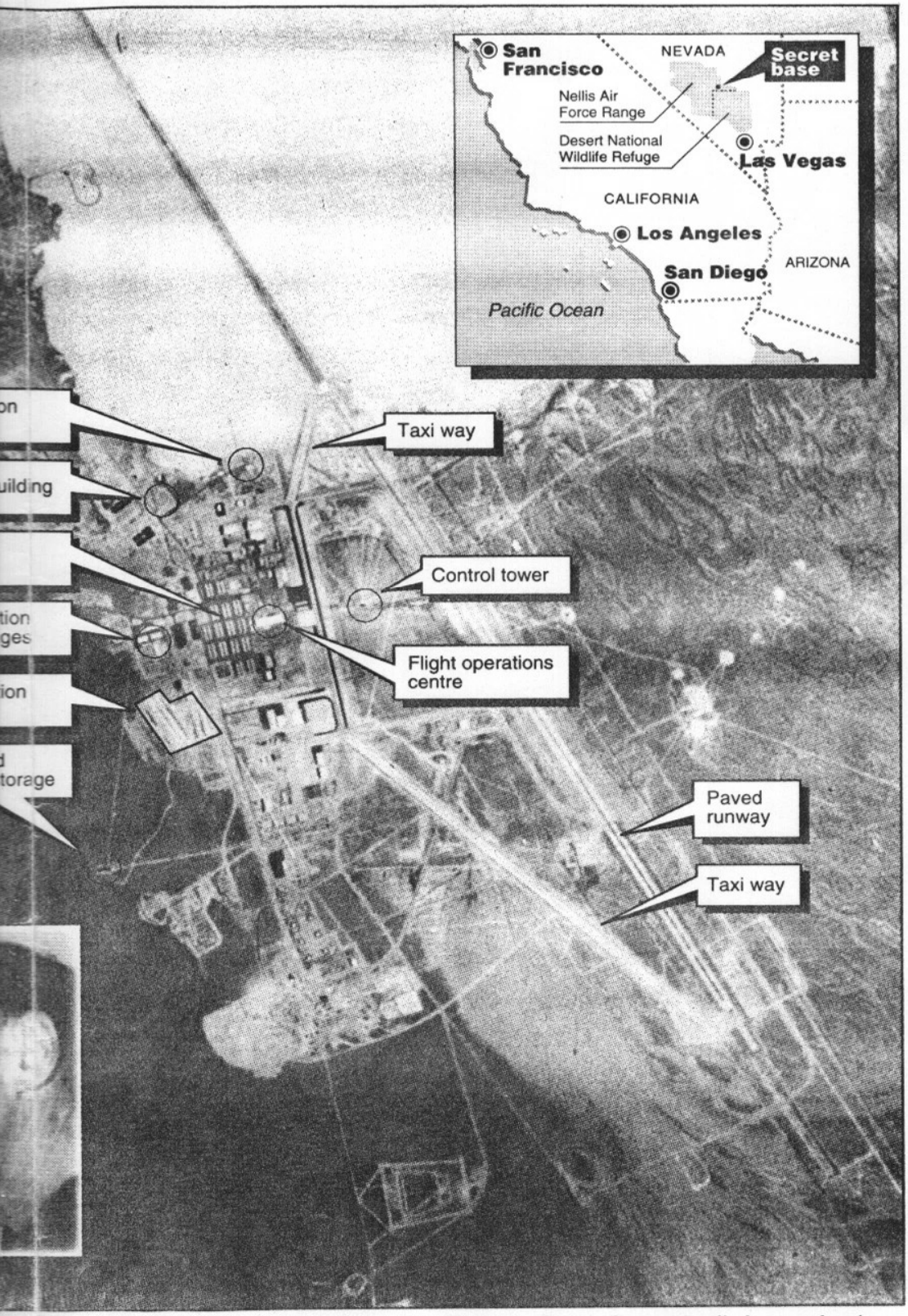
Three men and a teenage girl were found dead in the stairway of a nightclub at Elizabeth, New Jersey, apparently crushed in a stampede to get out after a fight started.

Atomic stamp

Japan has formally asked Washington to reconsider a plan to issue a US postage stamp next year marking the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

LD NEWS

n the desert that does not exist and meets the real victims of its toxic e anonymously suing the highest military authorities in the land



re of the secret base, taken from a satellite in 1988. Insert: Robert Frost, who died mysteriously

At a meeting last week the government stalled. Tomorrow Turley will begin an unprecedented battle by filing his 'Motion to Compel'.

He intends to make the unprecedented move of calling Perry, Lake and Widnall as witnesses, even though it is forbidden to subpoena Cabinet members.

The legal tool would be an exception to the Cabinet's immunity, which provides that a member can be called if he or she has specific personal knowledge of, or interest in, a case.

Turley asserts that 'both Perry and Widnall headed companies with financial ties to this facility of Black Programmes that precede their service in government.'

He claims that before Perry became deputy Defence Secretary in the Carter administration — directly responsible for the classification of the pre-Stealth Black Programmes at Area 51 — he was president of a company called ESL. The company was later merged into the giant TRW aerospace conglomerate, a major contractor on the Stealth programme.

Widnall was trustee of a company called Aerodynamics, whose records are now blocked for reasons of national security, and whom the plaintiffs say supplied equipment for Air Force Black Programmes.

The Pentagon declines to discuss the business affairs of its political masters, and the case itself. But its line on Area 51 meanders. 'There is no such place,' declared a spokesman on Friday. Two weeks ago, another spokesman said: 'There is a facility there, but I can't say what it is.'

A computer programmer from Boston, Glenn Campbell, decamped to a trailer in Rachel to set up what he calls the Secrecy Oversight Council, a watchdog on Area 51. Campbell found the ridge from which we looked down upon Dreamland this week, but soon even this may be impossible.

The Air Force has staked a sudden claim to 4,500 square miles of carefully designated land which would remove all viewpoints of the base from public access, possibly within one month. If the USAF wins, Dreamland will finally disappear from view.

Ed Vulliamy in Rachel, Nevada, sees a US Air Force base in th
waste disposal policy who, for fear of further reprisal, are a

Dying for an American dreamland

THE PILOTS who fly the supersonic fighters, crashing through the deep blue sky above, call it Dreamland on their radios. To the UFO-watchers who gather by night to peer into the desert heavens, it is Area 51. To those who chart the designs of secret aircraft before they are built, it is called Groom Lake.

Down below us, at the foot of a ridge in the ancient, high desert of Nevada, it spreads across the edge of the dry lake with parched, mighty mountains rising behind: a collection of hangars, buildings, runways and parked aircraft, and rising smoke caught by the late desert sun.

Whatever it is we are looking at does not appear on even the most detailed maps; the Pentagon will tell you that Dreamland or Area 51 Air Force base does not exist.

And the reason Dreamland 'does not exist' is because it hides not only the wonders of military technology, but the human price being paid for such technology: men now revealed as badly sick and even dying from toxic waste burned within the base.

For 40 years, Dreamland has been the keeper of America's darkest military secrets, the 'Black Programmes' that never feature on budget lists. The prototype for the U2 spy-plane was built here; then the 'Blackbird' that flew at 2,190mph; then the jet-black Stealth fighter that defies belief as well as radar. And now the base is cradle to a next generation of hyper-sonic airplanes, christened 'Aurora', which ... at 5,000mph ... will be

Turley's clients describe how materials used in the development of aircraft — paints, solvents, fuels — are so secret that they have to be disposed of on-site. They are dumped in open trenches, doused with fuel and burned.

The government has sought, unsuccessfully so far, to block the action on national security grounds. 'We don't contest the government's need for national security,' Turley said. 'But at Area 51, the government attempted to create a secret enclave in which domestic laws were not applicable. If a corporation had committed these violations, someone would be heading for jail right now. And the minute the government acknowledges the existence of Area 51, it falls within the jurisdiction of domestic laws and penalties.'

The clear desert sky is awesome to behold anywhere in the American West, vastly dark with

The US Air Force has staked a sudden claim to 4,500 square miles of carefully designated land which would remove all public viewpoints of the base

ward Teller, claimed he had worked with the Air Force at Area 51 on alien spacecraft.

The zone quickly became a hot favourite for flying saucer sightings. And so, halfway through supper at the A'le'Inn (pork chops, omelette and chips), the door bursts open and a score of UFO tourists arrive for a meal.

They are people like Helen Bradley from California: 'Oh yes, we saw one all right, on a tripod, moving very fast ... It's in the scriptures, that we shall ascend with them, but the government is covering it up ...'

But the base is all too worldly, the threat all too real. The scene is Las Vegas airport, 4am: beside a terminal tucked away on the outskirts of the runways, adjacent to a hotel-casino complex, a white Boeing 737 marked only with a red stripe waits to take off. A group of men appear in the half light, escorted by security guards, and board the jet. They are on their way to work the shifts at Dreamland.

When he did not catch the bus, this was how Robert Frost went to work for 10 years as a journeyman and foreman, during the development of the Stealth fighter, until his death in 1989.

'He couldn't tell anyone where he worked, or what he was working with,' said Mrs Frost, still living on the outskirts of Vegas. 'The phone at work was tapped.'

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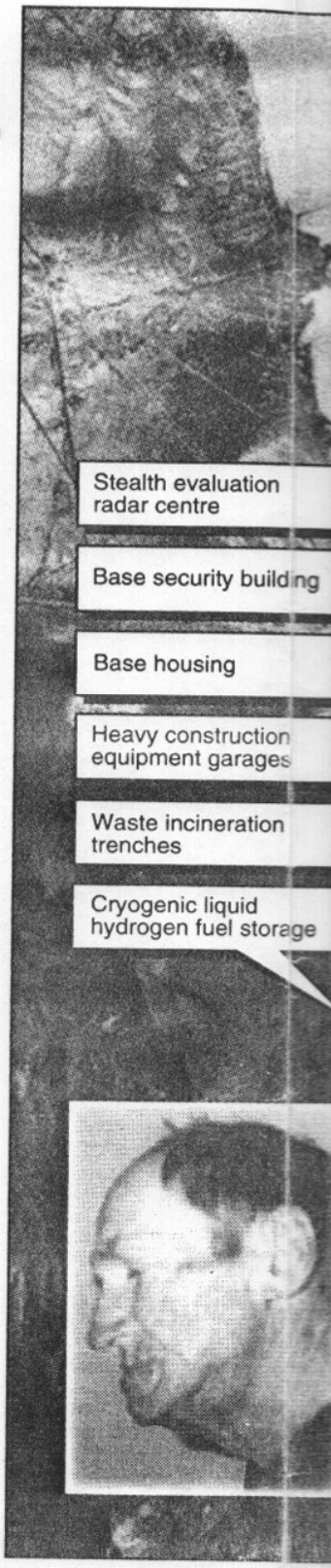

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